

OP-EDS

FREE MICE IN FREE MARKETS

MARCH 4, 2023 | JOEL SCHLOSBERG | 0 COMMENTS



An actual, if animated, Marxist at Disney: "Little Red Henski" en route to inciting class struggle in Alice's Egg Plant. Public domain.

Readers of the *Wall Street Journal* opinion page on March 1 may have had to double-check that April didn't arrive early. Or at least that the byline for an editorial lambasting Republicans who "have campaigned on free-market principles but governed as corporatists — supporting subsidies, tax breaks and legislative carve-outs," all "policies that benefit corporate America [but] don't necessarily serve the interests of America's people and economy" wasn't Ralph Nader's.

A closer look at "[Why I Stood Up to Disney](#)" shows that it's business as usual for governor Ron DeSantis, who may style his Florida "the state where woke goes to die" but whose crusade against the Magic Kingdom remains haunted by the grim, grinning ghosts of what Nader alternately calls "[corporate socialism](#)" and "[government guaranteed capitalism](#)."

Three decades before DeSantis's threats to micromanage Mickey, a different Republican governor was [eager](#) to "kick down any hurdles" in the Mouse's way. George Felix Allen's red carpet wasn't enough to bring Disney's America to Virginia, yet the unrealized project faced uncannily similar criticisms.

Murray Rothbard called it an exemplar of “subsidized, state-directed growth: the opposite of free markets” (not unjustifiably, given nine-figure handouts) and the “vulgarized, shlockized” output of a conglomerate more devoted to pandering for profits than safeguarding “the old Disney tradition.” Rothbard also anticipated DeSantis’s charges of “cultural Marxism” by tracing the pedigree of Disney’s historical research to “the notorious Foner family of Marxist scholars and activists.”

DeSantis could have [read](#) in the pages of *The Wall Street Journal* about how, despite Walt Disney’s admission that “my father was a Socialist,” his ideological inheritance amounted to little more than honing draftsmanship skills by copying imagery of “the big, fat capitalist with the money” placing “his foot on the neck of the laboring man.” The *Walt Disney’s Uncle \$crooge* comic book might have been just as cartoonish, but when developing the character of a post-Ebenezer Scrooge McDuck, Carl Barks took pains to [distinguish](#) the fanciful treasure hunter from “the millionaires we have around who have made their money by exploiting other people to a certain extent.”

Even the website of Rothbard’s own Ludwig von Mises Institute includes his [“Eisnerizing Manassas”](#) alongside Philip S. Foner’s [edition](#) of *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*. And Disney didn’t need help from “the Communist-dominated Fur Workers Union” or “the Communist-dominated Drug and Hospital Workers Union” to get audiences to line up for *The Lion King* while Rothbard wrote his warning.

DeSantis professes to be merely putting Walt Disney World Resort on a level playing field with the Sunshine State’s other theme parks like Universal Studios and SeaWorld. Yet his insistence on cutting off “a way for the left to achieve through corporate power what it can’t get at the ballot box” when “it is unthinkable that large companies would side with conservative Americans” reveals a willingness to use his electoral votes as carte blanche to override those voting with their untaxed dollars — or their feet.

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PUBLICATION/CITATION HISTORY

1. [“Free mice in free markets”](#) by Joel Schlosberg, *The Enterprise* [Wilson, North Carolina], March 6, 2023
2. [“Free mice in free markets”](#) by Thomas L. Knapp [sic], The Madill, Oklahoma *Record*, March 9, 2023
3. [“DeSantis’ Disney stance anti-free market”](#) by Joel Schlosberg, *The Daily Advance* [Elizabeth City, North Carolina], March 14, 2023
4. [“DeSantis’ Disney stance anti-free market”](#) by Joel Schlosberg, Rocky Mount, North Carolina *Telegram*, March 14, 2023
5. [“DeSantis’ Disney stance anti-free market”](#) by Joel Schlosberg, Reflector.com [Greenville, North Carolina], March 14, 2023